Programme as per the mandate of the Ministers in Doha in November 2001 and WTO General Council Decision of 1st August 2004 (commonly called the "July Framework"). Certain decisions were taken at the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference and these decisions are reflected in the Ministerial Declaration adopted by the Ministers at the concluding session on 18th December 2005. Copies of this Declaration have been placed in the Parliament Library.

The current round of negotiations launched at Doha is scheduled to conclude in 2006 as agreed by the Ministers at Hong Kong. These negotiations are expected to follow the timelines agreed to by the Ministers based on the decision taken at Hong Kong. There is no proposal to launch another round of WTO negotiations. The Hong Kong Ministerial Conference has, *inter alia*, taken a decision to eliminate export subsidies in Agriculture by the year 2013, with substantial part to be eliminated in the first half of the Implementation Period and that of Cotton Export subsidies by the developed countries by the year 2006. Disciplines will be developed to achieve effective cuts in trade distorting domestic support consistent with the July Framework adopted by the General Council of the WTO on 1st August 2004. On Trade Distorting Domestic Support in Cotton, the Ministers agreed to reduce them more ambitiously than under whatever general formula tobe agreed in negotiations and that it should be implemented over a shorter period of time than generally applicable. In accordance with the decision taken at Hong Kong, the WTO Members have agreed to finalise the modalities of negotiations in Agriculture by 30th April 2006, with submission of draft schedules by Members on the basis of these modalities by 31st July 2006.

Implementation of SAFTA

†1664. SHRI MANGANI LAL MANDAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that for the implementation of South Asia Free Trade Areas Treaty (SAFTA), which was formed by six countries of South-Asia region, all the concerned countries except Pakistan have collectively completed the formalities of its implementation;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) whether it is fact that Government of India has consented upon to implement it from 1st January, 2006 while on the country Pakistan is making unnecessary delay in its implementation; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERNCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH):

(a) to (c) All the seven Member States of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), namely, India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have ratified the Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA). The Member States, namely, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka have conveyed the instrument of ratification to the SAARCH Secretariat. The Government of India is in the process of sending the instrument of ratification after completing necessary formalities. As per the information received from the SAARC Secretariat, Pakistan has ratified the SAFTA Agreement on 15th February 2006 with retrospective effect from 1st January, 2006 as stipulated in the Agreement and they would send the instrument of ratification shortly.

High mortality in retired soldiers

1665. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that according to a study, soldiers die early after they hang up their boots compared to Government servants who retire later and live longer;

(b) if so, the reasons cited for the above situation in the said study; and

(c) whether Government had constituted any expert committee to ascertain the reasons therefor and remedial measures?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) No study has been conducted by the Government to examine life expectancy of retired soldiers vis-a-vis average life of civilians.